

Tuning the Disciplines: The Humanities

The Tuning Process in Two States:

Indiana



Marianne Wokeck

Utah



Norm Jones
Dan McInerney

Tuning the Disciplines: The Humanities

What is "Tuning"?

A form of "assessment"

**but one quite different from other
approaches**

"Tuning"

- not simply focused on assessing a *course*
 - focused on assessing the key learning outcomes of a *discipline*
 - assessment of individual courses takes place within this larger (and more coherent) framework
- not a fixed body of standards
 - instead, starts with a more "generic" body of outcomes for a discipline
 - each course can make distinctive contributions to those larger goals
 - anticipates variety and diversity

“Tuning”

-not a top-down approach

(imposed by an administrator over many disciplines under his or her authority)

-instead, a *bottom-up approach* –

determined by the faculty involved in a particular discipline

-not a process tied to one campus or college or department

-instead, part of a *global* effort by scholars within disciplines world-wide

“Tuning”

- not an assessment process “forced” upon U.S. institutions by European universities
 - instead, an approach we’ve been invited to consider and improve upon
 - a process that should **permeate – but not dictate** – our academic activities
- not an abstract exercise
 - instead, one that produces **tangible, even measurable results**
 - in syllabi, course structure, curriculum design, evaluation rubrics

“Tuning”

- not simply an emphasis on clarification of course goals
 - instead, emphasizes **accountability** (to a wide range of “stakeholders”)

“Tuning” focuses more on skills and competencies

- rather than course names and credit hours
- tied to “outcomes” rather than “inputs”

The central question Tuning asks:

*What should students **know, understand, and be able to do** in a discipline?*

a question:

- we should constantly consider
- that should have a concrete, realistic, and transparent answer
- that should guide the informing goals of any individual course faculty teach
- that should ground the informing logic of a multi-year curriculum we create
- whose answers come from academics / students / alumni / employers

How did we approach Tuning within our state's group?

(History: discipline without formal, systematic standards)

*Different approaches
in Indiana and Utah*



**Experience with Utah
colleges and universities**

Preparation for the Tuning project

Skepticism about the Tuning project



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**Experience with Utah
colleges and universities**

Preparation for the Tuning project

Experience with cross-campus discussions

-sponsored by Utah System of Higher Education

for Utah's 9 public colleges and universities

**-articulation; common course numbering; annual
majors' meetings; Utah Regents' Task Force on
General Education**



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Preparation for the Tuning project

**Now, working with faculty from different
disciplines**

**-Utah State Board of Regents held *joint*
meetings of History & Physics faculty as we
began Tuning project**

**-returned to home departments to work up
provisional versions of “learning outcomes”**



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Skepticism about the Tuning project

- concerns about academic freedom
 - experience with previous "assessment" projects"
 - contentious, politically-charged nature of "standards" in History
 - confusion over vocabulary
- "tuning" / "learning outcome" / "competency" / "rubric"



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Key professional organiza.: American Historical Assn.

-*hesitant* to impose uniform standards

-cognizant of *diverse* missions, goals, audiences, levels of U.S. institutions of higher learning

Yet: AHA / OAH / others *do* reflect – and offer guidance – on essential components of a history education

-as with Tuning: we do not all play the same song – but we are "tuned" to perform in the same key

-“imprimatur” of the AHA important



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Five steps in the department's approach:

- 1. Collected info from other Tuning and assessment projects:**
 - “outcomes” from the History Tuning process in the UK**
 - AHA: *Assessment in History: A Guide to Best Practices***
 - rubric, Univ. North Carolina, Wilmington**
 - AAC&U Value Nat’l Panel Meeting, May 2009**



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Five steps in the department's approach:

2. Informing approach:

-LIMITED

-CLEAR

-CONCRETE

-SHARED

-DIVERSE



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- 3. Looked for *common denominators* in the long lists of learning outcomes:**
- reduced to three basic categories:**
 - HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE**
 - HISTORICAL THINKING**
 - HISTORICAL SKILLS**
 - filled out each of these categories: 7 learning outcomes for History**



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Five steps in the department's approach:

4. With learning outcomes stated, experiment with a learning outcomes "rubric" for our capstone class

-use it as a basic, 3-category model that could be adapted for other courses

(Historical Knowledge / Thinking / Skills)



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Five steps in the department's approach:

**5. Shared material with other History
Departments in the state**

**(through email discussions, video
conferencing, and face-to-face joint
meetings in Salt Lake City)**

DIFFERENT STARTING POINT IN INDIANA

- **Lumina Foundation's Tuning USA Pilot = Starting Point of Discussion**
 - **No prior experience or practice of statewide higher-education-faculty-focused discussion or cooperation**
 - **Indiana Commission of Higher Education (ICHE)**
 - **Geography Educators Network of Indiana (GENI)**
 - **Indiana Association of Historians (IAH)**
 - **Leadership of ICHE and choice of three very different disciplines presented particular challenges**
 - **State-wide, albeit not representative, discussion among history faculty**



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PLANNING THE PROCESS (very time sensitive)

- **Following the project reporting outline suggested by Lumina (foregrounding the European experience)**
- **Separate meetings of the three disciplines but coordination of outcomes among team leaders**
- **Composition of team members = highly selective**
 - **Community College**
 - **Colleges (more public than private)**
 - **Universities (no private university)**

1ST FOCUS: GENERAL (GEN'L EDUCA.) COMPETENCIES

➤ Starting points

- Catalogue of 31 competences (**note the spelling**) developed in Europe
- Discussion of goals – in Europe; in Indiana
- Ordering of competencies (**note the spelling**)
 - Thinking and Analytical Competencies
 - Personal Motivation and Initiative Competencies
 - Communication Competencies
 - External Awareness Competencies

- Outcome: agreement! (Chemistry; Education; History)

2ND FOCUS: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

- **Becoming familiar with the literature (crash course)**
 - **Bologna and Tuning processes and experiences in Europe**
 - **Creating a project site (Epsilon – open to all with edu suffix)**

- **Discussion of the literature in its relevance to the situation of teaching history in Indiana**
 - **Transferability**
 - **Transparency**
 - **Collegiality**

3RD FOCUS: GOAL SETTING

- **Proceeding by level**
 - **Associate**
 - Successful transferability to 4-year institution
 - **Bachelor – by agreement = major focus**
 - What do we want history majors to know upon graduation?
 - **Master**
 - Preparation for what? (professions; PhD)
 - **PhD**
 - Preparation for what? (professions; academy)



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4TH FOCUS: CREATING A ROAD MAP FOR THE REPORT

- **Drafting**
- **Consultation with team members and others**
- **Discussion among team members**
- **Reflection**
- **Revision**
- **Submission of draft of History Report**



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FINALIZING THE REPORT

- **Learning from the experience of the other disciplines**
- **Insights from surveys of faculty, students, alumni, employers**
 - **Limited**
 - **Requires follow-up in the future**
- **Discussion of contextual parts of the report**
 - **Frank**
 - **Collegial**
 - **Helpful, but incomplete**



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OUTCOMES

- **Competencies = major accomplishment**
 - **Basis for discussion among team members as well as for discussion at large**
- **Need and opportunity for discussion in Indiana about goals in education and in the discipline in a collegial fashion, with positive consequences**
- **Need and opportunity to introduce discussion about competencies to colleagues at home institutions and in departments and programs**

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What's next?



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- inter-rater reliability evaluation of capstone course rubrics**
- surveys of "essential skills and competencies"**
 - faculty, students, alumni, employers**
- learning outcomes rubrics for other classes (freshman survey, upper-division)**



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- Restructuring the curriculum
(in light of budgetary constraints & new “learning outcomes”)
- development of a “pre-major”
- relation of History courses to Gen Ed courses
- consider **sequencing** of skills and competencies developed by different courses
- apply Tuning to our masters program

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What did we learn?

TRANSPARENCY

UTILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

ADAPTABILITY

GLOBAL IDENTITY

NEXT STEPS (1)

- **Widening the circle**
 - **Sharing with other project teams**
 - **Fruitful cooperation: exchanging experiences and learning from best practices in Utah and Indiana**
 - **Round table presentation and discussion at the annual meeting of the Indiana Association of Historians**
 - **Making the discussion state-wide**
 - **Translating the discussion into action**
 - **Providing inspiration and resources**
 - **Publications and presentations**



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NEXT STEPS (2)

- **Translating pilot project outcomes into practice at particular institutions**
 - **Challenge at IUPUI**
 - **General education is articulated in Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) across the curriculum**
 - **Mapping the PULs to the General Competencies (or vice versa)**
 - **Aligning academic program review and assessment strategies with the goals of Tuning**



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NEXT STEPS (3A)

- Translating pilot project outcomes into practice in a particular department
 - Situation in my department (well reviewed but discontent with *status quo*)
 - Application of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) in the major
 - Mapping the PULs to History Competencies (or, vice versa)

NEXT STEPS (3B)

- Articulating “why history as a pursuit of study and in preparation for satisfying careers?” to students, parents, and employers
- Discussion of Tuning, in concert with LEAP, DEAL, and other learning goal and outcome models, especially those developed for the discipline by the AHA, to find the best alignment between them and departmental needs and goals
- Curriculum and course review
 - Setting goals, starting with the capstone course
 - Creating a rubric for the capstone course
 - Devising a recommended course of study
 - Revision of syllabi (assignments and assessment)



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NEXT STEPS (4)

- **Translating pilot project outcomes into practice in a particular school**
 - **Situation in the IU School of Liberal Arts**
 - **Application of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) in the liberal arts curriculum**
 - **Assessment of a liberal arts curriculum based on IUPUI's PULs**
 - **Mapping the PULs to general and discipline-specific competencies of the liberal arts curriculum**
 - **Curriculum review**
 - **Review and revision of study plans**

IUPUI

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS

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THE POTENTIAL OF TUNING FOR HISTORY FACULTY IN INDIANA

- **Alignment of the National History Standards with the General Competencies (“Cambridge Measures”)**
- **Successful transition from high school to college**
- **Transferability of competencies (discipline and level-specific), not just credits to community college; college; graduate programs**
- **Applicability of competencies to studies and careers**

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Norman L. Jones

norm.jones@usu.edu

Daniel J. McInerney

daniel.mcinerney@usu.edu

Marianne Wokeck

mwokeck@iupui.edu